

BAIDU'S SELF-DRIVING CAR HAS HIT THE ROAD



Baidu's self-driving car has hit the road. **BAIDU**

CHINA'S FIRST FULLY self-driving car has hit the road.

Today, Baidu, the “Chinese Google.” announced its autonomous car has successfully navigated a complicated route through Beijing.

According to the company, the modified BMW 3-Series drove an 18.6-mile route around the capital city that included side streets as well as highways. The car made left, right, and u-turns, changed lanes, passed other cars, and merged onto and off the highway.

Those capabilities in themselves are nothing new for the field—Google and the major automakers working on the technology have no trouble there—but it’s a significant milestone for China, and proof that Baidu is a real contender in the race to build and deliver the fully revolutionary technology first.

The test also makes good on a promise Baidu and BMW made in June, to launch a self-driving car this year (though it’s a generous definition of the word “launch”). The company’s deep learning research lab has been working on this project since 2013.

Generally, there are two approaches to developing this technology: The automaker way is to take regular cars and slowly add in features, like the ability to drive itself on the highway. Google is going for the “moonshot” straight to a car no human will ever drive, one that’s fully capable in every situation. Baidu says it’s taking a third way, “to advance incrementally through different environments, rather than through different levels of driving autonomy.” It’s working on fully autonomous vehicles that will be limited geographically, like a bus that drives the same route every day. Limiting the route limits the challenges the vehicle will face.

That kind of service depends on extremely detailed maps that include things like the precise location of lane markers and curbs, the height of traffic lights, and what every traffic sign says. The idea is that if that information is pre-loaded, the vehicle can focus its computing power and sensors on temporary obstacles—like pedestrians and other cars. Like Google, Baidu is making its own maps. It says that “within five to ten years, the majority of China’s roadways could be mapped” to that level to detail.



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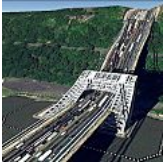
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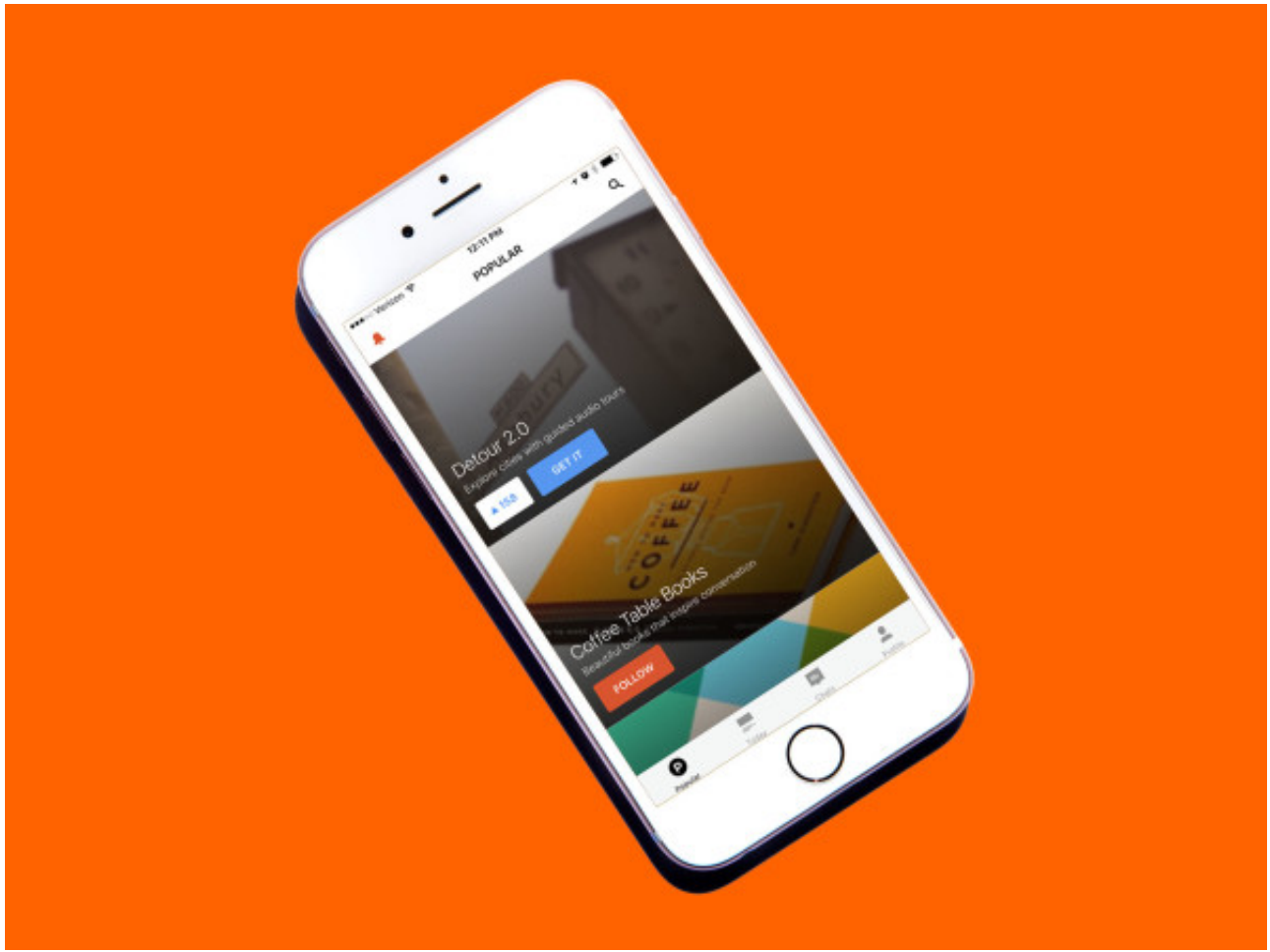


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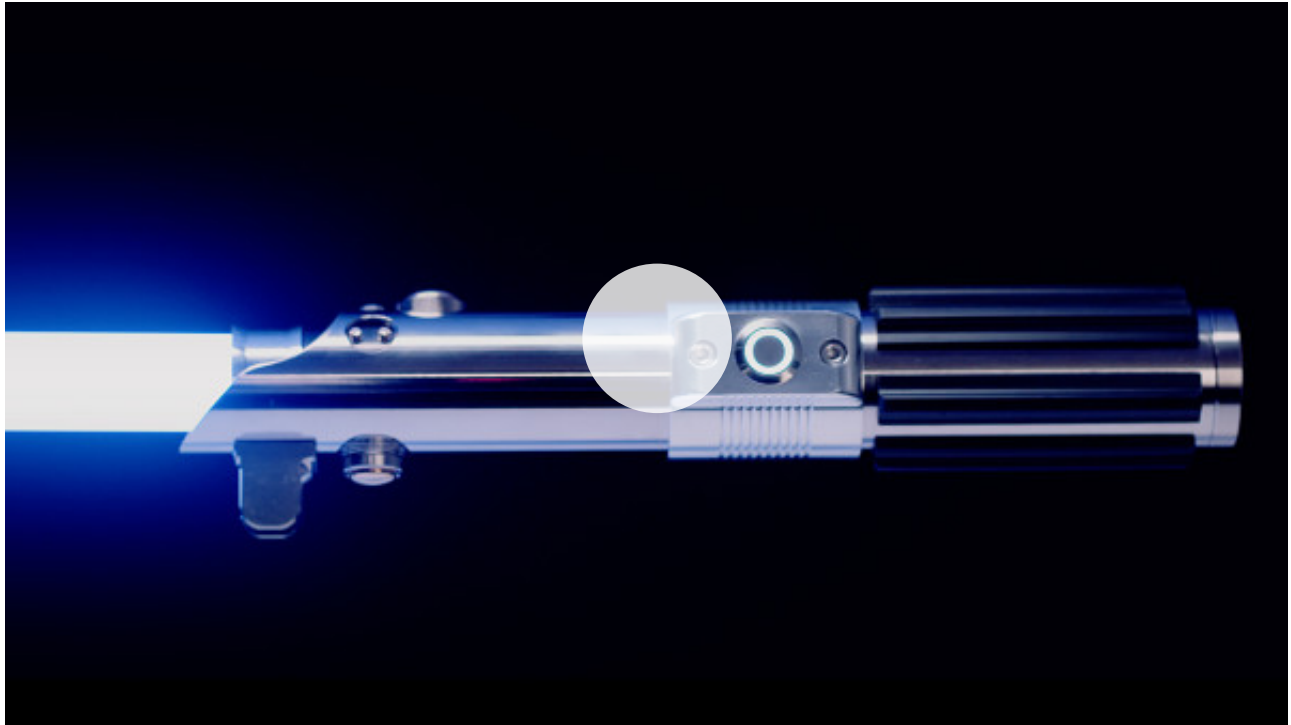
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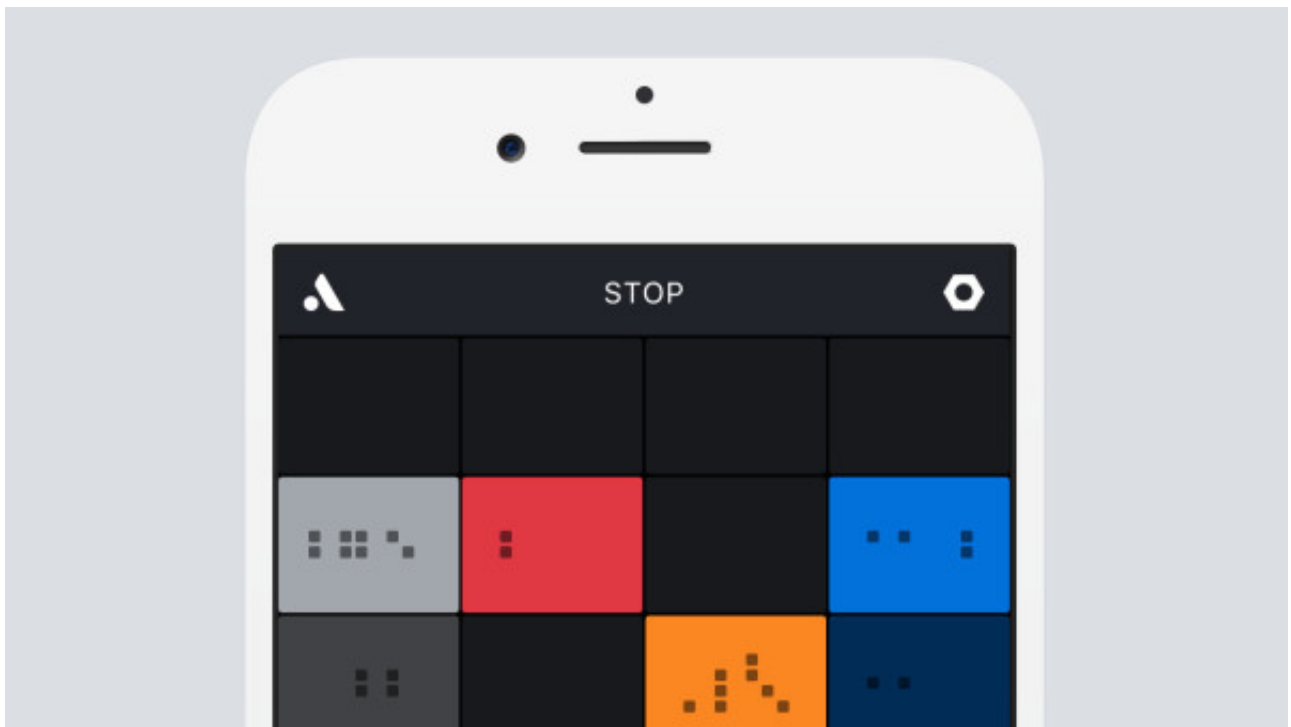
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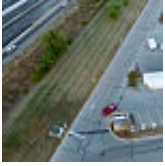
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